

Martin Brian Mulroney

Canada's eighteenth prime minister

Quick Facts

Term(s) of Office:

- September 17, 1984–June 25, 1993

Born

- March 20, 1939, Baie-Comeau, Quebec

Education

- St. Francis Xavier University, B.A. 1959
- Laval University, LL.L. 1964

Personal Life

- Married 1973, Mila Pivnicki (b. 1953)
- One daughter, three sons

Occupations

- Lawyer (called to the Quebec Bar in 1965)
- 1974–1975 Member, Cliche Commission
- 1976–1977 Vice-President, Iron Ore Company
- 1977–1983 President, Iron Ore Company
- Author
- Currently practising law

Political Party

- Progressive Conservative
- 1983–1993 Party Leader

Constituencies

- 1983–1984 Central Nova, Nova Scotia
- 1984–1988 Manicouagan, Quebec
- 1988–1993 Charlevoix, Quebec

Political Record

- Leader of the Opposition 1983–1984
- Constitutional Accord (Meech Lake) 1987
- Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1988
- Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement 1988
- Immigration and Refugee Board 1989
- Canada's Green Plan for a Healthy Environment 1990
- Canadian participation in the Gulf War 1991
- Goods and Services Tax 1991
- North American Free Trade Agreement 1992
- Constitutional Accord (Charlottetown Agreement) 1992
- Nunavut Settlement Agreement 1993

Biography

Throughout our history, trade has been critical to Canada's livelihood. Now, almost one third of what we produce is exported. Few countries in the world are so dependent on trade. This trend ultimately threatens the jobs of many Canadians and the living standards of the nation as a whole. We must confront this threat. We must reverse this trend. To do so, we need a better, a fairer, and a more predictable trade relationship with the United States. At stake are more than two million jobs which depend directly on Canadian access to the U.S. market.—Brian Mulroney, 1985

Canada's ability to compete in a world market was of primary importance to Brian Mulroney, who felt Canada's competitiveness had been eroded by years of Liberal social spending. Canadian economic success could only be secured by access to foreign markets; this Mulroney achieved through the 1988 free trade agreement with the United States and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992.

Martin Brian Mulroney was born in Baie-Comeau, Quebec in 1939, the son of an electrician. At 14, the young Mulroney went to St. Thomas, a Catholic high school in Chatham, New Brunswick. In 1955, he attended St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, studying arts and commerce before majoring in political science. After graduating with honours in 1959, Mulroney started studying law at Dalhousie University in Halifax, and then transferred to Laval University in the city of Québec, a year later. In 1964, he was offered a position with the prestigious law firm of Howard, Cate, Ogilvy et al., and moved to Montréal to work with them.

One of his first challenges as a lawyer was working on Laurent Picard's Commission of Inquiry on the St. Lawrence Ports, where he gained experience as a negotiator in labour relations. Mulroney first came into prominence as a lawyer when he was appointed to the Cliche Commission of inquiry into the Quebec construction industry, set up by Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa in 1974. The commission uncovered unprecedented corruption and violence in the construction industry. As a result of this high-profile report, Mulroney became well known in Quebec.

He had been involved in politics since his university days, when he joined the Conservative party and campaigned for the Nova Scotia Tories in 1956. Mulroney also participated in campus politics and served as prime minister of St. Francis Xavier's model parliament. While at Laval, he was elected vice-president of the Conservative Students' Federation and by 1961 he was a student advisor to Diefenbaker. As a lawyer in Montréal, he continued working for the Conservatives behind the scenes, producing pamphlets, raising money and seeking out candidates.

In 1976, Mulroney ran for federal leadership of the Conservative party, but lost to Joe Clark on the third ballot. Although he was recognized in Quebec as a result of the Cliche Commission, he was not as well known to the party outside the province. Furthermore, the fact that he had never been elected to Parliament was seen by many as a handicap. After the convention, Mulroney accepted an

offer of executive vice-president of the Iron Ore Company of Canada and was appointed president the following year.

In 1983, he ran again for Conservative leadership. He was the only bilingual Quebec candidate, and as such, his ability to appeal to Tories across the country was considered a great advantage. Mulroney won the leadership and gained his first seat in the House of Commons through a by-election in the riding of Central Nova.

In the 1984 election, Mulroney led the Conservatives to one of the greatest majorities in Canadian history, winning 211 seats in the House of Commons. Four years later, the Conservatives won another majority.

During his nine years in office, Mulroney brought in the two free trade agreements and introduced the Goods and Services Tax. Language rights in New Brunswick were entrenched in Canada's constitution and the Nunavut Agreement with the Inuit of the Eastern Arctic set in motion the creation of a third territory in Canada, representing a major achievement in Aboriginal land settlement.

He also endeavoured to achieve constitutional reform. The Meech Lake Accord attempted to define conditions under which Quebec could sign the 1982 Constitution, but failed to become law when it was not passed by the Manitoba and Newfoundland legislatures. Another endeavour to secure constitutional unanimity was undertaken with the Charlottetown Accord in 1992. A national referendum was called on this agreement, but it was ultimately defeated.

Mulroney's stand against South African apartheid won him respect around the world. He negotiated a treaty in 1990 with the United States requiring industry to drastically cut sulphur and nitrogen oxide emissions. He also was an architect of the Sommet de la Francophonie.

Mulroney retired from politics in 1993 and returned to Montréal to practice law.

International Relations

Mulroney began his term with the pledge to improve relations with the Americans. He met with President Reagan in March 1985 to discuss missile defence and free trade. The meeting, held on St. Patrick's Day, was dubbed the Shamrock Summit. This paved the way towards the Free Trade Agreement in 1988. The agreement was extended to include Mexico (NAFTA), which was signed in 1992.

In 1986, the United Nations honoured the people of Canada collectively with the Nansen Medal for their commitment to the cause of refugees. The Immigration and Refugee Board was established in 1989.

In the Persian Gulf War of 1991, Canada supported the UN force, contributing ground troops, ships, aircraft, and a field hospital.

In 1994, the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre was established and named in honour of Lester B. Pearson, former Prime Minister of Canada and recipient of the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize. The Centre trains and educates not only Canadians but also civilian, military and police forces from around the world in promoting peace and security.

Anecdote

In the Footsteps of the chief

John Diefenbaker wasn't the only prime minister to declare his ambition to be prime minister at a young age; Brian Mulroney also announced to the world that he wanted to be prime minister when he grew up.

Mulroney was a great fan of Diefenbaker. As campus delegate from St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, he attended the 1956 Conservative leadership convention and voted for Diefenbaker. In 1961, Mulroney became a student advisor to the Chief, counselling him on Quebec affairs. He was studying law at Laval by this time, and his colleagues refused to believe that their classmate was actually discussing politics with the Prime Minister of Canada. They dared Mulroney to invite Diefenbaker to speak at Laval. His disbelieving classmates were astonished to see the Prime Minister of Canada in law class one day, introduced by his advisor, Brian Mulroney!

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